AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.18 (1), May-August, 2026; https://ajemates.org

ROLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC VALUES IN AFRICA'S MULTILINGUAL SOCIETIES: PERCEPTION OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LECTURERS IN SOUTH EAST, NIGERIA

Uloh-Bethels, Annah C[1]; Okonji, Ngozi N[1]; Bassey, Ubong I[2]; *Okon, Etim O[1]; Oke, Busola A[3] & Akor-Stephen, Onyinyechi[1]

Phone: 07039594169[1], 08109290968[1], 08039306283[2]; 08033751183[1], 08146880161[3] & 08131256061[1]
E-mail: annah.uloh-bethels@unn.edu.ng[1], ngozi.okonji.90470@unn.edu.ng[1], ubong.bassey@unn.edu.ng[2], okonetim2001@gmail.com[1], awe.busola@bouesti.edu.ng[3] & akoronyinyechi2@gmail.com[1]

1 Department of Arts Education, Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
2 Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Nigeria, Nsukka
3 Department of Vocational and Entrepreneurial Studies, Faculty of Technology, Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere Ekiti

Corresponding Author
Okon, Etim Okon
okonetim2001@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The study examined the perception of lecturers in federal universities in South East, Nigeria on the role of English language education in promoting democratic values in Africa's multilingual societies. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. Four research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Participants were 185 lecturers drawn from federal universities in South-East, Nigeria. Data was collected using a 20-item instrument titled Role of English Language Education in Promoting Democratic Values in Africa (RELEPDVA). The instrument was validated by three experts and subjected to a reliability test that yielded an index of 0.87 using Cronbach's Alpha Method. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions while t-test was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 probability level. Findings indicated that lecturers perceive English language education as instrumental in fostering democratic values, developing critical thinking, encouraging civic engagement, and respect for multilingualism. There was no significant gender difference in overall perception of the lecturers but variations exist in pedagogical strategies, competence in guiding learning experience and training needs. Recommendations included integrating democratic themes into the English language curriculum, implementing targeted professional development programmes, and increasing institutional support as measures capable of strengthening educators' capacity to nurture democratic consciousness among students in Africa's diverse linguistic landscape.

Keywords: English Language Education, Democratic Values and Multilingual Societies

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.18 (1), May-August, 2026; https://ajemates.org

Introduction

Democracy, is a system of government. Here, power held by the people is directly or indirectly invested on the people through elected representatives and participation of citizens in decision-making to ensure that governance serves the interest of the people. As a political system, democracy relies fundamentally on an informed citizenry capable of critical thinking, civic participation, and respectful dialogue in ensuring that democratic values are imbibed by the people. This is because democratic values promote inclusivity, equality and social cohesion especially in a multilingual society. This notion is upheld by Moustakes (2023) who asserts that democratic societies that prioritize inclusivity, equality and social participation tend to have higher levels of social cohesion because such societies foster a sense of belonging and shared identity among citizens, which in turn promotes cooperation and mutual trust.

As a process, democracy involves and also aims at ensuring that power is exercised in a responsible, fair, transparent and accountable manner. Anyadiegwu, Osuchukwu & Ogayi (2020) note that at the heart of this democratic process lies language, especially the English language, which is the primary medium through which citizens engage with public discourse, access information, and participate in national development. In contemporary Africa, where multilingualism is the norm, English language assumes an even more complex role in both facilitating and limiting democratic engagement (Akintayo, Atobatele & Mouboua, 2024 and Agbor, 2024). As one of the African's most widely used official languages, English functions not only as a tool of communication but also as a gatekeeper of socio-political inclusion and exclusion (Martinez, 2024). This dual role of English highlights the importance and emphasis on how it is taught in national education systems, particularly in shaping democratic consciousness in multilingual countries like Nigeria.

In Nigeria, a linguistically diverse country with over 500 indigenous languages (Akindele, Olatuun & Akano, 2022 and Jegede O. O. 2024), English serves as the official language and the dominant medium of instruction in schools and universities. This makes English language education a vital channel for shaping the minds and attitudes of future citizens (Nwokoro, Chima, Ubelejit-Nte, Enobakhare & Joseph, 2020; Iyekekpolor, 2021). Through exposure to texts, classroom discussions, and critical writing tasks, students are equipped with language competencies that go beyond grammar and vocabulary to include analytical reasoning, persuasive argumentation, and civic literacy. According to Njoku (2017); Prahaladaiah (2021) and Sugiono (2024), when English language teaching is strategically delivered, it can become a transformative force for developing democratic values such as respect for human rights, tolerance of diversity, and participatory decision-making. The extent to which these democratic outcomes are realized, however, depends largely on the pedagogical approach and commitment of English language lecturers.

The role of English language lecturers is pivotal in this process. These educators act not only as facilitators of language acquisition but also as intellectual guides who shape the ideological orientations and civic dispositions of their students. According to Sugiono (2024), teacher innovation and creativity with their pedagogical choices of what content to teach, how to structure classroom dialogue, and which

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.18 (1), May-August, 2026; https://ajemates.org

materials to use can significantly influence how students engage with the concepts of justice, freedom, and equality. In higher education institutions, especially federal universities in Nigeia, English language lecturers are often responsible for teaching general studies courses that cut across disciplines, thus giving them access to a broad and diverse student population. This unique position enables them to instill democratic values through classroom practices such as debate, critical reading of texts, reflective essays, and open discussions on societal issues.

Democracy itself is not just a system of government but a way of life characterized by active engagement, respect for pluralism, and openness to dissent. According to Kiess (2021) and Tal (2025) for democracy to flourish, especially in complex and culturally diverse settings, education systems must play a proactive role in cultivating democratic consciousness. Teaching English language has the potential to foster this consciousness by creating opportunities for students to practice democratic skills within the classroom setting (Romero & Pérez, 2021 and Nigar, Kostogriz, Mihli & Yu, 2024). However, the extent to which English language instruction in Nigerian universities achieves this democratic purpose is still uncertain. Many studies (Ndiribe & Aboh 2020; Ugwu, 2020 and Barton, Riddle & Lowien, 2024) point to an overemphasis on grammatical accuracy and exam preparation with limited focus on critical thinking or democratic education.

Africa's multilingual societies present an opportunity for democratic education. For instance, in Nigerian's multilingual society, where the language of instruction at all levels of education is English, English language educators can carry out the instructional delivery of democratic education by the instrumentality of English language. English language educators are professionals saddled with the responsibility of exploring education and imparting knowledge to learners. By implication, it is their responsibility to impart democratic values to learners by integrating democratic themes and values into the English language pedagogy. The following democratic values can be integrated: *equality* (all citizens having equal rights and equally treated fairly); *freedom* (all citizens enjoying equal liberty in speech, religion and education); *justice* (ensuring fairness and impartiality); *accountability* (being responsible to the people and answerable to one's decisions, actions and inaction); *participation* (citizens' engagement in decision-making process); *transparency* (openness to public scrutiny) and respect for human rights (protection of citizens lives, properties, and individual rights and dignity). In Africa's multilingual societies, democratic values such as recognizing and respecting multiple languages (linguistic diversity); ensuring all citizens, regardless of language, have access to information, services and participation (equal access); representing diverse linguistic groups in government and decision-making (inclusive representation); protecting the right to use one's native language (language rights); valuing different cultural backgrounds (cultural sensitivity); preventing language base-discrimination (non-discrimination); and providing essential services and information in multiple languages (multiple language accessibility). These democratic values can be taught using different language methodologies, assessing and evaluating English language learning and delving into the dynamic English language instruction.

However, in Africa' multilingual societies, educating learners in democracy values

appears to also poses a challenge due to linguistic diversity. Ndiribe & Aboh (2020) and Ugwu (2020) found that while linguistic diversity is a source of cultural richness, it can also create communication barriers and fuel ethnic divisions if not well-managed. English, as a unifying official language, holds the promise of bridging these gaps. Yet, its colonial legacy and perceived elitism continue to spark debates about inclusivity and representation. In such contexts, the responsibility falls on educators, particularly English language educators, to navigate these tensions and promote inclusive pedagogical practices that empower all students to engage in the democratic process. Barton, Riddle, and Lowien (2024) also found that although many English language lecturers view the subject as a means of empowering students and fostering democratic ideals, they often find their efforts constrained by systemic limitations and students' lack of critical literacy orientation.

The Critical Pedagogy, as proposed by Paulo Freire, serves as the theoretical foundation. According to Giroux (2021), Critical Pedagogy (CP) views education as a political and transformative act, where learners are empowered to question societal norms, reflect on injustices, and take meaningful action. Walsh (2015) and Gonzales & Zhang (2025) are of the opinion that CP is an approach to education that seeks to challenge colonial structures and promote societal transformation. It rejects the "banking model" of education, which treats students as passive recipients of knowledge, and instead promotes dialogic, participatory learning. Within the context of democratic education using the English language, this theory supports teaching approaches that encourage debate, dialogue, literary analysis, and reflective writing as these are tools that develop critical consciousness and democratic competence. Bozkurt & Topkaya (2023) explain that integrating CP into English language teaching enables students to reflect on and question the power dynamics embedded in language use, while also enhancing their communicative skills, cultural awareness, and engagement with social and political issues. In a multilingual and politically complex society like Nigeria, where many voices struggle to be heard, English language classrooms have the potential to become spaces of inclusion and empowerment. This assertion appears to be gender-biased hence, the necessity of examining the perception of male and female lecturers in federal universities in South East, Nigeria on the role of English language education in promoting democratic values in Africa's multilingual societies.

Gender plays a significant role in shaping the pedagogical practices and experiences of English language lecturers. In Nigerian higher education, male and female lecturers may experience different expectations, opportunities, and challenges within their teaching environments. Opesade, Famurewa & Igwe (2017) and Igiebor (2020) observe that female lecturers often navigate gender biases that affect their classroom authority, professional recognition, and interactions with students. These gendered dynamics can influence how democratic values such as inclusion, equity, and participation are taught and modeled in the classroom. Understanding the role of gender in lecturers' perceptions and practices is therefore essential for evaluating how effectively English language education fosters democratic ideals across diverse contexts.

Given this backdrop, the present study is situated at the intersection of language education and democratic development within Africa's multilingual contexts, with a particular focus on

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.18 (1), May-August, 2026; https://ajemates.org

Nigeria. It explores the perceptions and practices of English language lecturers in federal universities in South East, Nigeria regarding the promotion of democratic values. While English language education is widely acknowledged for its potential to foster critical thinking, civic participation, and social awareness, there remains a significant gap in empirical research on how lecturers perceive and enact this role in practice especially within Nigeria's higher education system. This study sought to fill that gap by examining how educators understand and implement democratic pedagogy in their classrooms, the challenges they encounter, and any gender-related differences in their approaches. In doing so, it contributes to broader conversations about the transformative potential of language education in nurturing democratic consciousness and inclusive citizenship in Africa's linguistically diverse societies. To carry out this study, the following research questions and hypotheses were posed.

Research Questions

1. What is the perception of English language lecturers in federal universities in South East, Nigeria on the role of English language education in promoting democratic values in African multilingual society?
2. What pedagogical approaches can English language lecturers use to promote democratic engagement among students in African multilingual society?
3. What challenges hinder the integration of democratic values into English language education in federal universities in South East, Nigeria?
4. What strategies can be adopted to enhance the role of English language education in promoting democratic values in African multilingual society?

Research Hypotheses

$H0_1$: No significant difference will exist between male and female English language lecturers' perceptions on the role of English language education in promoting democratic values in Africa's multilingual societies.

$H0_2$: No significant difference will exist between male and female English language lecturers' perception on the challenges hindering the integration of democratic values into English language education.

Methods

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The study participants comprised 185 English language education lecturers drawn from the five federal universities in the South East region of Nigeria made up of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State; Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State; Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ebonyi State, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State and Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo State. In each of the five universities, 17 males (15x5=85) and 20 females (20x5=100) English language education lecturers were drawn using stratified random sampling technique. This constituted the 185 (85 males + 100 females) participants used as the sample for this study. The study utilized a structured 20-item instrument titled Role of English Language Education in Promoting Democratic Values in

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.18 (1), May-August, 2026; https://ajemates.org

Africa (RELEPDVA) for data collection. The instrument had four clusters: A, B, C, and D that assessed four key areas: perception of English language education in fostering democratic values, pedagogical approaches used to promote democratic engagement, challenges in integrating democratic values into English language education, and strategies to enhance its role in democratic development. It was validated by three experts from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Its reliability index of 0.87 was determined using Cronbach's Alpha Method. The questionnaire items were structured on a four-point response scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) with the corresponding values of 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. The following benchmarks were set for data interpretation: 3.50 to 4.0 = SA, 2.50 - 3.49 = A, 1.50 - 2.49 = D, and 0.50 - 1.49 = SD. Copies of the questionnaire were administered electronically to the respondents. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while the null hypotheses were tested using t-test at a 0.05 level of significance at the relevant degree of freedom.

Results

Table 1: Respondents' Responses on the Perception of English Language Lecturers in Federal Universities on the Role of English Language Education in Promoting Democratic Values in a Multilingual Society

S/N	Item	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Rem
1	English language education fosters critical thinking, which is essential for democracy.	185	3.34	1.08	Agree
2	Teaching English language enhances students' ability to engage in democratic discourse	185	2.87	0.73	Agree
3	English language instruction promotes respect for diverse opinions in multilingual societies.	185	2.90	0.70	Agree
4	The use of English in classrooms helps students develop civic engagement skills.	185	3.38	1.01	Agree
5	English language lecturers play a crucial role in shaping students' democratic awareness.	185	2.74	0.77	Agree
	Cluster Mean	185	3.05	0.86	Agree

Key: $\bar{x}$ = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation; Rem = Remark; N = Number of respondents = 185

The results in Table 1 show that items 1 to 6 have a mean score between 2.50 and 3.38, which is set as a criterion for agree. This indicates that lecturers agree that English language education fosters critical thinking, which is essential for democracy, promotes respect for diverse opinions in multilingual societies and enhances students' ability to engage in democratic discourse, English language instruction. Lecturers also agree that the use of English in classrooms helps students develop civic engagement skills and that English language lecturers play a crucial role in shaping students' democratic awareness.

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.18 (1), May-August, 2026; https://ajemates.org

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents' Responses on Pedagogical Approaches that English Language Lecturers can Use to Promote Democratic Engagement among Students

S/N	Item	N	x̄	SD	Rem
6	I use debate and argumentation exercises to enhance students' democratic engagement.	185	2.85	0.70	Agree
7	I encourage students to analyze democratic themes in English textbooks and literature texts using reflective writing	185	2.80	0.81	Agree
8	I incorporate peer discussions on democratic values in my English language lessons.	185	2.77	0.71	Agree
9	I use collaborative learning strategies such as group work for effective teaching democratic principles and values.	185	3.50	0.98	Agree
10	I include role-playing and simulations in my teaching to enhance democratic participation.	185	2.77	0.71	Agree
	Cluster Mean	185	2.81	0.79	Agree

Key: x̄ = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation; Rem = Remark; N = Number of respondents = 185

Data in Table 2 reveal that all the items have mean scores above 2.50, which is set as a criterion for agree. This indicates that lecturers agree that incorporating discussions on democratic values using debate, argumentation exercises and collaborative learning strategies are pedagogical approaches that English language lecturers can use to promote democratic engagement among students. It is also an indication that the lecturers exhibited a unanimous agreement with encouraging students to analyze democratic themes in English textbooks and literature texts and equally including role-playing and simulations in their teaching to enhance democratic participation.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents' Responses on the Challenges that Hinder the Integration of Democratic Values into English Language Education in Nigerian Universities

S/N	Item	N	x̄	SD	Rem
11	The university curriculum does not explicitly support teaching democratic values in English language courses.	185	2.16	0.75	Disagree
12	There is a lack of instructional materials that focus on democracy in English language education.	185	2.78	0.81	Agree
13	Although democratic themes and values are included in the curriculum, time constraints hinder their instruction in English language courses.	185	2.78	0.81	Agree
14	Some students resist discussions on democratic values due to cultural or political reasons.	185	2.74	0.77	Agree
15	There is inadequate training for English lecturers on integrating democracy-related themes in language education.	185	3.30	1.10	Agree
	Cluster Mean	185	2.59	0.86	Agree

Key: x̄ = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation; Rem = Remark; Number of respondents = 185

The results in Table 3 show that apart from item 11 which has a mean score of 2.16, others have mean scores above 2.50. This means that although lecturers disagree that the university curriculum does not explicitly support teaching democratic values in English language courses, they agree that lack of instructional materials that

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.18 (1), May-August, 2026; https://ajemates.org

focus on democracy in English language education; students' resistance to discussions on democratic values due to cultural or political reasons; time constraints and inadequate training for English lecturers on integrating democracy-related themes in language education hinder the teaching of democratic values in English language courses.

Research Question 4: What strategies can be adopted to enhance the role of English language education in promoting democratic values?

Table 4: **Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents' Responses on Strategies that can be adopted to Enhance the Role of English Language Education in Promoting Democratic Values**

S/N	Item	N	x̄	SD	Rem
16	Incorporating more democratic themes in the English language curriculum will enhance students' understanding of democracy.	185	3.30	0.97	Agree
17	Professional development programs should train lecturers on democracy-focused teaching strategies.	185	3.50	0.66	Strongly Agree
18	Encouraging open discussions on societal issues in English language classrooms will foster democratic participation.	185	3.50	0.99	Strongly Agree
19	Use of technology and digital media can improve democratic engagement in English language learning.	185	2.78	0.78	Agree
20	More government and institutional support is needed to integrate democratic values into English language education.	185	2.84	0.75	Agree
	Cluster Mean	185	3.07	0.83	Agree

Key: x̄ = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation; Rem = Remark; Number of respondents = 185

Results in Table 4 show that all the items 16 - 20 have mean scores between 2.5 and 3.50. This indicates that lecturers are of the opinion that incorporating more democratic themes in the English language curriculum; use of technology and digital media; more government and institutional support; professional development programs to train lecturers on democracy-focused teaching strategies, and encouraging open discussions on societal issues in English language classrooms will help students' understanding of democratic values thereby promoting, foster democratic participation and also enhance the role of English language education in promoting democratic values.

Table 4: **T-test Analysis, Mean and Standard Deviation of Male and Female Lecturers' Perceptions on the Role of English Language Education in Promoting Democratic Values**

S/N	Items	Gender	N	x̄	SD	t-stat	P-val	Rem
1	English language education fosters critical thinking, which is essential for democracy.	Male Female	85 100	3.42 3.31	1.013 1.113	.631	.223	**NS**
2	Teaching English language enhances students' ability to engage in democratic discourse	Male Female	85 100	2.77 2.91	.722 .727	- 1.284	.300	**NS**
3	English language instruction promotes respect for diverse opinions in multilingual societies.	Male Female	85 100	2.92 2.90	.720 .691	.181	.866	**NS**
4	The use of English in classrooms helps students develop civic engagement skills.	Male Female	85 100	3.45 3.34	.928 1.044	.687	.156	**NS**

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.18 (1), May-August, 2026; https://ajemates.org

5	English language lecturers play a crucial role in shaping students' democratic awareness.	Male Female	85 100	2.72 2.75	.783 .769	-.242	.880	**NS**
	Cluster Mean	Male Female	85 100	3.06 3.04	.83 0.87	-0.01	0.49	**NS**

Key: N = Number of respondents; x̄ = mean, SD = Standard Deviation; df = Degree of freedom; p-val = Probability value; NS = Not Significant; S = Significant; Rem = Remark

The cluster mean for the male and female lecturers are 3.06 and 3.04 with a standard deviation of 0.83 and 0.87. The significance level for the comparison between male and female students is 0.49, indicating no statistically significance between male and female English language lecturers' perceptions of the role of English language education in promoting democratic values in multilingual societies. Therefore, the null hypothesis that no significant difference will exist between male and female English language lecturers' perceptions on the role of English language education in promoting democratic values in Africa's multilingual societies was not rejected.

H0$_2$: There is no significant difference between male and female English language lecturers in their perception of challenges hindering the integration of democratic values into English language education.

Table 5: **T-test Analysis, Mean and Standard Deviation of Male and Female English Language Lecturers Perception of Challenges Hindering the Integration of Democratic Values into English Language Education**

S/N	Items	Gender	N	x̄	SD	t-stat	P-val	Rem
11	The university curriculum does not explicitly support teaching democratic values in English language courses.	Male Female	85 100	2.13 2.17	.700 .777	-.282	.221	**NS**
12	There is a lack of instructional materials that focus on democracy in English language education.	Male Female	85 100	2.65 2.85	.880 .770	- 1.574	.045	**NS**
13	Time constraints in the curriculum hinder the inclusion of democratic themes in language instruction.	Male Female	85 100	2.87 2.69	.791 .764	1.454	.387	**NS**
14	Some students resist discussions on democratic values due to cultural or political reasons.	Male Female	85 100	1.42 1.48	.809 .918	-.429	.329	**NS**
15	There is inadequate training for English lecturers on integrating democracy-related themes in language education.	Male Female	85 100	3.32 3.29	1.112 1.103	.133	.836	**NS**
	Cluster Mean	Male Female	85 100	2.48 2.50	0.86 0.87	-0.14	0.36	**NS**

Key: N - Number of respondents; x̄ = mean; SD = Standard Deviation; df = Degree of freedom; p-val = Probability value; NS = Not Significant, S = Significant; Rem = Remark

The cluster mean for the male and female lecturers are 2.48 and 2.50 with a standard deviation of 0.86 and 0.87. The significance level for the comparison between male and female students is 0.36 indicating no statistically significant difference between male and female English language lecturers in their perception of

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.18 (1), May-August, 2026; https://ajemates.org

challenges hindering the integration of democratic values into English language education. This means that the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between male and female English language lecturers in their perception of challenges hindering the integration of democratic values into English language education was also not rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that English language lecturers in federal universities in South East, Nigeria strongly perceive English language education as playing a vital role in promoting democratic values in multilingual societies. Lecturers highlighted values such as tolerance, critical thinking, civic engagement, and respect for diversity as central to democratic development and argued that English language instruction provides a shared linguistic platform for students from various ethnic backgrounds to engage with these ideals. This finding aligns with that of Njoku (2017), Nwokoro et al. (2020) and Sugiono (2024) who assert that language education, particularly English in post-colonial multilingual settings, can serve as a unifying civic tool. The lecturers' emphasis on the transformative power of English classrooms echoes Freire's theory of education as a practice of freedom, reinforcing the idea that language teaching should empower students to question and reflect on societal structures. Respondents also noted that English enables access to global discourses on democracy and human rights, thus broadening students' perspectives beyond their immediate communities. This shared perception underscores a shift from viewing English as a colonial remnant to recognizing its potentials for social integration and civic development.

In terms of pedagogical practices, lecturers reported using a variety of student-centered methods such as debates, reflective writing, peer discussions, role-play and the analysis of socially relevant texts to promote democratic engagement. These methods are in line with the methods advocated by Romero & Pérez (2021), Bozkurt & Topkaya (2023) and Gonzales & Zhang (2025) who emphasized the role of dialogic, participatory instruction in fostering civic competencies. Lecturers also highlighted the integration of themes related to justice, equality, and civic responsibility into language and literature classes, noting that literature in particular serves as a rich site for examining societal issues. These classroom practices reflect Freirean dialogic pedagogy and suggest that many lecturers are deliberately fostering an environment that encourages democratic participation and critical consciousness. Despite institutional pressures, many of them still find ways to embed democratic ideals through text selection and classroom interaction. Their approaches demonstrate a commitment to building not just language skills, but informed, reflective, and active citizens who are knowledgeable in democratic values.

However, several challenges hinder the full integration of democratic values into English language education. The lecturers pointed to rigid curricular frameworks, overcrowded classrooms, lack of professional training in democratic pedagogy, and limited institutional support as major barriers. These constraints are consistent with the findings of Barton, Riddle & Lowien (2024) who identified similar systemic issues that limit teachers' ability to implement democratic teaching practices. Participants expressed frustration that examination-oriented systems leave little room for open discussions or student-

led inquiry, both of which are essential for nurturing democratic habits. They also cited the absence of administrative incentives for innovative pedagogy, noting that lecturers who attempt to implement democratic methods often do so without institutional recognition or support. These limitations suggest that while lecturers desire to promote democratic principles and values among students, structural reforms are needed to create an enabling environment. Without addressing these systemic barriers, the democratic potential of English language education will remain largely aspirational.

To overcome these challenges and enhance the democratic role of English language education, the lecturers proposed a range of strategies including curriculum revision, the introduction of civic education modules, interdisciplinary teaching, and sustainable professional development in democratic pedagogy. These recommendations are supported by scholars such as Iyekekpolor (2021), Kiess (2021) and Nigar et al. (2024) who argue that promoting democracy through (English language) education requires holistic reforms that align with curriculum, training, and institutional policy. The lecturers emphasized the importance of workshops and training sessions to build capacity in critical pedagogy, especially for early-career academics. They also called for stronger collaboration between departments to integrate civic themes across disciplines and make democratic learning more comprehensive. Importantly, participants urged university administrators and policymakers to provide structural and financial support for these reforms. These strategies suggest that enhancing democratic education is not just a pedagogical issue, but also a matter of policy alignment, institutional vision, and long-term investment in faculty development.

The study also found that gender was not a statistically significant factor of lecturers' perception of the role of English language education in promoting democratic values thereby confirming the first null hypothesis as not rejected. Both male and female lecturers shared similar views on the civic potential of English language education and expressed equal commitment to fostering democratic ideals in their classrooms. The shared perspectives suggest that the promotion of democracy through English language instruction transcends gender and reflects broader pedagogical values embraced across the profession. Hence, promoting democracy values through (English language) education requires holistic reforms as noted by Nigar et al. (2024) and not a matter of which gender ifs fronting such promotion. This may have informed why lecturers across the gender spectrum appear equally invested in using their classrooms as spaces for dialogue, inclusion, social transformation and participatory democracy.

Similarly, in determining the challenges hindering the integration of democratic values into English language education, the second null hypothesis was upheld because gender was also not a statistically significant factor. The findings revealed that both male and female lecturers experienced similar institutional constraints such as lack of training, time limitations, and unsupportive curricula. These challenges appear to be systemic rather than gender-specific, suggesting that professional content and context, rather than individual demographics, shapes lecturers' experiences. While female lecturers may still face other gender-based challenges in academia, these did not significantly affect their

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.18 (1), May-August, 2026; https://ajemates.org

ability to identify or engage with democratic pedagogical practices. This finding is at par with that of Igiebor (2020) who found that female lecturers often navigate gender biases that affect their classroom authority, professional recognition, and interactions with students. The findings call for inclusive and systemic reforms that address the needs of all lecturers, regardless of gender, in order to promote equity and effectiveness in democratic education.

Conclusion

This study investigated the perception of English language lecturers in federal universities in South East, Nigeria on the role of English language education in promoting democratic values in Africa's multilingual societies. The findings revealed a strong consensus among lecturers that English language education can serve as a powerful tool for fostering democratic principles such as critical thinking, civic responsibility, tolerance, and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity. Through interactive pedagogical practices and the integration of civic themes into classroom content, lecturers are actively contributing to the development of democratic consciousness among students. However, these efforts are often hindered by systemic challenges, including rigid curricula, limited training opportunities, and institutional constraints. The study also found that gender does not significantly influence lecturers' perceptions on the challenges they encounter, suggesting that professional context and shared pedagogical goals are more critical in shaping democratic engagement in the classroom. This highlights the need for systemic reforms that support all lecturers, regardless of gender, in promoting democratic values through English language instruction.

In light of these findings, it is imperative for educational stakeholders such as university administrators, policymakers, and curriculum developers to revise language education frameworks to support democratic learning. This includes providing professional development in democratic pedagogy, integrating civic education across disciplines, and fostering institutional cultures that value participatory and inclusive teaching methods. Future research could extend this inquiry to other regions of Nigeria or explore the long-term impact of democratic pedagogy on students' civic engagement and critical consciousness. Ultimately, if adequately supported, English language education in Nigeria holds great potential not only for linguistic development but also for nurturing the democratic ideals and values essential for national unity and sustainable democratic governance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were proposed:

1. ***Curriculum Reform:*** National Universities Commission (NUC) should revise English language curriculum at the tertiary level to deliberately incorporate democratic themes such as human rights, social justice, civic participation, and cultural diversity. This will help to align language instruction with the broader goal of democratic education.
2. ***Training and Professional Development:*** There is a need for continuous professional development programmes focused on democratic pedagogy. Workshops, seminars, and collaborative platforms should be organized to equip lecturers with strategies for integrating

democratic values into their teaching practices.

3. ***Institutional Support:*** University management should create enabling environments that support participatory teaching methods. This includes reducing bureaucratic restrictions, promoting academic freedom, and encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration that enriches the democratic focus of English language education.
4. ***Policy Alignment:*** Educational policymakers should integrate democratic education goals into national language and higher education policies. A clear framework that supports the teaching of democratic values through language instruction should be developed and implemented.
5. ***Multilingual Inclusion:*** Considering Nigeria's multilingual context, English language education should be used as a bridge to promote respect for linguistic and cultural diversity. Lecturers should be encouraged to draw connections between English and indigenous languages to reinforce inclusive democratic discourse.
6. ***Further Research:*** More empirical studies should be conducted across other geopolitical zones in Nigeria to explore regional variations in the implementation of democratic pedagogy. Longitudinal studies could also examine the long-term impact of such pedagogies on students' civic behaviours and national consciousness.

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.18 (1), May-August, 2026; https://ajemates.org

REFERENCES

Agbor, A. (2024). Language as a tool of divisive politics: Perspectives on foreign nationals in South Africa. *Potchefstroom Electronic Law Journal*, *27*, 1-23.

Akindele, J. A., Olatuun, J. O. & Akano, R. (2022). Linguistic diversity, Nigerian indigenous languages and the choice of the English language for national sustainability. Retrieved from https;//www.researchgate.net

Akintayo, O., Atobatele, F., & Mouboua, P. (2024). Navigating multilingual identities: The role of languages in shaping social belonging and political participation. *International Journal of Applied Research in Social Sciences, 6*(5), 828-844.

Anyadiegwu, J., Osuchukwu, N., & Ogayi, M. (2020).The role of political communication in English in developing a strong tradition of democratic practices in multilingual Nigeria. *IDOSR Journal of Communication And English, 5*(1), 84-90.

Barton, G., Riddle, S., & Lowien, N. (2024). "The last bastion of democracy": Teachers' perceptions of the democratic potential of English curriculum. *English Teaching: Practice & Critique, 23*(4), 475-491.

Bozkurt, D., & Topkaya, E. (2023). Critical pedagogy in English language teaching. *Innovational Research in ELT, 4*(2), 55-58.

Giroux, H. (2021). Critical Pedagogy. *Handbuch Bildungs- und Erziehungssoziologie*, 1-16.

Gonzales, W., & Zhang, Y. (2025). Reshaping language learners' languaging habits: A worl Englishes informed Critical Pedagogy. *RELC Journal*, 1-22.

Igiebor, O. (2020). Women, academic leadership and the constricting gender equity policies inNigerian universities: an integrated feminist approach. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 42*(4), 338 - 352.

Jegede, O. O. (2024). Evaluating the potential of unified Hausa-Igbo-Yoruba languages to ease language related social and political conflicts in Nigeria. *Journal of Universal Language*, 25(2), 51 – 92.
Doi: https;//doi.org/10.22425/jul.2024.25.2.51

Iyekekpolor, O. M. (2021). Teaching English language in a typical Nigerian secondary school:A review of twenty years pedagogical experience. *Journal of Literature, Languages and Linguistics, 77*, 1-7.

Kiess, J. (2021). Learning by doing: The impact of experiencing democracy in education on political trust and participation. *Politics, 42*(1), 75 - 94.

Martinez, J. (2024). Understanding inequalities of Philippine English in job interviews. *World Englishes, 43*(4), 607-623.

Ndiribe, M., & Aboh, S. (2020). Multilingualism and marginalisation: A Nigeria diversity approach. *International Journal of Multilingualism, 19*(1), 1-15.

Nigar, N., Kostogriz, A., Mihli, O., & Yu, X. (2024). Curriculum as 'folding'

democratic practice: Integrating Deleuzian and Deweyan philosophies with the lived experiences of English teachers. *Curriculum Perspectives, 44*, 411– 424.

Njoku, J. C. (2017). English language, the Nigerian education system and human development.*UJAH: Unizik Journal of Arts and Humanities, 18*(2), 211-226.

Nwokoro, C., Chima, F., Ubelejit-Nte, A., Enobakhare, E., & Joseph, O. (2020). Advancing English Language Education Policy in Consideration of Multilingualism on National Integration in Nigeria. *Journal of Education & Social Policy, 7*(1), 181-187.

Moustakas, L. (2023). Social cohesion: Definitions, causes and consequences. Encyclopedia, 3(3), 1028 -1037. Retrieved from www.mdpi.com/2673-839...

Opesade, A., Famurewa, K., & Igwe, E. (2017). Gender divergence in academics' representation and research productivity: a Nigerian case study. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 39*(3), 341 - 357.

Prahaladaiah, D. (2021). Value-Based teaching English language and literature. *Journal of Education Culture and Society, 12*(2), 59-66.

Romero, Y., & Pérez, A. (2021). Fostering citizenship and English language competences in teenagers through task-based instruction. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development, 23*(2), 103-120

Sugiono, S. (2022). Values education through the English language learning. *International Journal of English Education and Linguistics (IJoEEL), 4*(1), 50-56.

Sugiono, S. (2024). Cultivating democratic values in ELT classrooms. *International Journal of English Education and Linguistics (IJoEEL), 6*(2), 267-271.

Tal, N. (2025). History education and democratic consciousness in Israel. *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education, 24*(1), 69-84.

Ugwu, E. (2020). Preserving Language Diversity for Sustainable Development in Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal ESJ, 16*(11), 83-95.

Walsh, C. (2015). Decolonial pedagogies walking and asking. Notes to Paulo Freire from AbyaYala. *International J ournal of Lifelong Education*. 34(1), 9 –21. Taylor & Francis Routledge